



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/537
10 October 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fiftieth session
Agenda item 110

PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Study on the impact on children of armed conflict

Progress report by the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/157 entitled "Protection of children affected by armed conflicts", in which the Assembly expressed grave concern about the tragic situation of children in many parts of the world as a result of armed conflicts; urged all Member States to continue seeking comprehensive improvement of the situation with appropriate and concrete measures; and requested bodies and organizations of the United Nations, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, within the scope of their respective mandates, to cooperate in order to ensure more effective action in addressing the problem of children affected by armed conflicts.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to appoint an expert, working in collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to undertake a comprehensive study of this question, including the participation of children in armed conflict and the relevance and adequacy of existing standards. The study is to make specific recommendations on ways and means to prevent children from being affected by armed conflicts and to improve their protection, for example, from the indiscriminate use of all weapons of war, especially anti-personnel mines. The study will also recommend measures to promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, in particular measures to ensure proper medical care and adequate nutrition, taking into account the recommendations by the World Conference on Human Rights and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In August 1994, Ms. Graça Machel was appointed to undertake the study.



3. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested Member States and United Nations bodies and organizations, as well as other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to contribute to the study. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the study at its forty-ninth session. At its forty-ninth session, the Assembly adopted resolution 49/209, in which it took note of the Secretary-General's report (A/49/643) and requested that a second progress report be submitted at its fiftieth session.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PLAN

4. The expert is working in close collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and UNICEF. Professional and administrative assistance is being provided jointly by UNICEF and the Centre for Human Rights. The study enjoys the guidance and advice of a group of eminent persons made up of individuals of international repute and integrity drawn from every geographic region and representing a wide diversity of political, religious and cultural backgrounds; this group also acts as a public advocate. The study receives further counsel from a technical advisory group composed of men and women with recognized international expertise in the areas to be studied and in the welfare of children in general; its task is to help ensure that the study benefits from the highest standards of accuracy and professionalism. Both groups have met once during the last 12 months and are expected to meet at least three times over the course of the study.

5. In order to ensure a coordinated response by the major international bodies representing the rights of children in armed conflict, an inter-agency task force meets periodically at Geneva. Participants include representatives from the Centre for Human Rights, the Department for Humanitarian Affairs, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP) and WHO. Representatives of non-governmental organizations have also played a major role in developing the research programme and are actively participating in the study.

6. Wide-ranging consultations at the regional level are under way. These are being organized in collaboration with UNICEF, Centre and UNHCR regional or country representatives, regional economic commissions and other international agencies and non-governmental organizations. National institutions, ministries of health and social welfare, human rights organizations, the media, religious organizations, independent experts and eminent leaders within civil society are being consulted. Military authorities, Governments and legal experts are also involved, particularly with regard to the application of international humanitarian and human rights law and the reinforcement of preventive measures. To date, consultations on eastern and southern Africa and the Arab region have been held in Addis Ababa and Cairo, respectively. Other consultations are planned for Asia, Europe and Central America.

7. At the national level, field visits and consultations are being undertaken. The expert has visited Angola, Rwanda, Cambodia and Lebanon, with other visits being planned over the coming months. Field visits have allowed the expert to meet with government representatives, as well as with non-governmental organizations, youth and community organizations, religious groups, agencies, national institutions and other interested parties. They have also provided a first-hand opportunity to witness the impact of armed conflict on all aspects of the child's life, to hear children and their families tell of their own experiences, and to observe the implementation of programmes designed to promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children within their families and communities. The study is paying particularly close attention to the experience of countries dealing with the long-term consequences of armed conflict.

8. As set out in the Secretary-General's first progress report (A/49/643), the final report of the study will be presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session in 1996. The report was made available to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-first session to facilitate its consideration of the study, in accordance with paragraph 10 of resolution 48/157; the Commission will receive a further report at its fifty-second session.

III. CONCLUSIONS

9. The study on the impact on children of armed conflict will seek to give new coherence and fresh impetus to the efforts of the international community to protect children and children's rights from the effects of armed conflicts. The study will draw on a wide range of practices and experiences at all levels, which will be combined in a comprehensive appraisal of the needs of children, leading in turn to specific recommendations for action directed to the national, regional and international communities to enable them to respond more effectively to those needs.
